

O 191252Z APR 88
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6898
INFO GULF WAR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 0316
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY 0138
DIA WASHDC PRIORITY 0086

S E C R E T BAGHDAD 02144

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL MOPS IZ
SUBJ: IRAQI OPERATION TO RECAPTURE FAO: "WE SHOWED
THE SOVIETS"

11. (SECRET-ENTIRE TEXT)

12. IN A MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR MAY 19, MFA
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DIRECTOR QAYSI DISCUSSED
THE BRIEFING ON FAO GIVEN BY FONMIN AZIZ TO HIS
SENIOR STAFF THAT MORNING.

13. AZIZ TOLD HIS PEOPLE THAT THE DECISION TO
RETAKE FAO WAS MADE LAST FALL UNDER ELABORATE
SECRECY WHEN THE IRAQI LEADERSHIP CONCLUDED THAT
THE 598 PROCESS WOULD NOT GO ANYWHERE UNLESS IRAQ
GAVE IT A PUSH BY GAINING SOME MILITARY VICTORY.
(THE DECISION TO PRESS AHEAD WITH STOCKPILING
"HUSSEIN" MISSILES FOR MASSIVE USE WAS PROBABLY
RELATED.). IRAQ THEN ENGAGED IN A CAREFUL DECEPTION
OPERATION, BUT AT THE SAME TIME IT CREATED A FULL-
SCALE MODEL OF THE FAO SALT PANS FOR DETAILED
PRACTICE OPERATIONS BY ITS UNITS. WHEN THE TIME
FOR THE OPERATION WAS NEAR, SADDAM, MINDEF
KHAIRALLAH AND THE CHIEF OF STAFF MADE A WELL-
PUBLISIZED VISIT TO THE NORTH, BUT THEN SECRETLY
JETTED IMMEDIATELY TO BASRA. PREVIOUSLY SOME
UNNEEDED ARMY UNITS IN THE SOUTH (WE RECALL REPORT-
ING ON A FULL DIVISION) WERE MOVED NORTH IN DAYLIGHT
TO DECEIVE THE IRANIANS FURTHER.

14. IRAQI TROOPS JUMPED OFF AT 0625 MAY 17 ACCORDING
TO AZIZ, AFTER DAWN WHEN IRANIAN UNITS WOULD HAVE
BEGUN TO RELAX. (AN ORDER TO LAUNCH THE ATTACK AT
2200 THE PREVIOUS NIGHT WAS PART OF THE DECEPTION).
IRAQI UNITS ACHIEVED COMPLETE SURPRISE AND PENE-
TRATED THE ENTIRE IRANIAN DEFENSES IN THE SALT PANS
IN A GUDERIAN-STYLE OPERATION, LEAVING IT TO
FOLLOWING UNITS TO MOP UP RESISTANCE WHILE THE TWO
PINCERS OF THE REPUBLICAN GUARD AND THE SEVENTH
CORPS JOINED ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE OBSTACLE.
IRAQI UNITS THEN ENTERED FAO THE MORNING OF MAY 18.
AZIZ SAID THAT IRAQI CASUALTIES HAD BEEN MORE THAN
REASONABLE FOR SUCH AN OPERATION AND CONSIDERABLY
LESS THAN PLANNERS HAD ANTICIPATED. AZIZ DID NOT
GIVE ANY IRANIAN CASUALTY FIGURES OR COMMENT HOW
MANY MIGHT HAVE ESCAPED.

15. QAYSI SAID THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES WERE
ELATED BY THE NEWS WHICH HE AGREED WAS IRAQ'S
GREATEST MILITARY SUCCESS SINCE 1980-81. HE RECALLED
A MEETING HE ATTENDED OF AZIZ WITH SHEVARDNADZE IN
THE SUMMER OF 1986 IN MOSCOW AFTER THE FAO DEBACLE
WHEN THE SOVIET, TREATING AZIZ HUMILIATINGLY LIKE
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF A DEFEATED NATION, URGED HIM
TO AGREE TO HALT THE WAR ON THE BASIS OF A
CEASEFIRE IN PLACE. AZIZ TOLD SHEVARDNADZE THAT
IRAQ WOULD NEVER SETTLE FOR LESS THAN A COMPREHENSIVE
PEACE WITH FULL WITHDRAWAL AND AN EXCHANGE OF
PRISONERS, BUT THE SOVIET FONMIN OBVIOUSLY DISMISSED
THIS POSITION AS PURE PROPAGANDA. NOW IRAQ WAS
VINDICATED, QAYSI SAID WITH PRIDE, AND HAD SHOWN
THAT IT ALWAYS MEANT WHAT IT SAID.

16. IN A FINAL PURELY PERSONAL COMMENT, QAYSI
GUESSED THAT IRAQ, FLUSHED WITH SUCCESS, MIGHT NOT BE
FINISHED HITTING THE IRANIANS. HE WOULD NOT BE
SURPRISED, HE SAID, TO SEE A SIMILAR OPERATION IN
THE FUTURE EAST OF BASRA. THE AMBASSADOR COMMENTED

THAT SUCH AN OPERATION STRAIGHT TOWARDS IRAN COULD
BE EVEN TOUGHER THAN FAO.

NEWTON